

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00  
NSCE-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03  
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EB-08 LAB-04  
SIL-01 AID-05 COME-00 FRB-03 XMB-02 OPIC-03 IO-13  
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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASH DC NIACT IMMEDIATE 7590

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 MANAGUA 3998/1

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, NU

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR TALKS WITH SOMOZA: AUG 26

SUMMARY: THE AMB MET WITH SOMOZA FOR 45 MINUTES ON 26 AUGUST.  
DURING THE CONVERSATION, TOPICS OF DISCUSSION WERE THE RECENT  
FSLN ATTACK, THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN NICARAGUA AND THE  
GENERAL STRIKE. SOMOZA OUTLINED TO THE AMB THE MEASURES HE  
WAS CONSIDER ING TO COPE WITH THE SITUATION. END SUMMARY

1. PURSUANT TO DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTIONS TO MAINTAIN  
FREQUENT CONTACT WITH SOMOZA IN ORDER TO LEARN AS MUCH AS  
POSSIBLE ABOUT HIS INTENDED COURSE OF ACTION, AMB REQUESTED  
AND WAS GRANTED A MEETING WITH SOMOZA ON THE MORNING OF 26  
AUGUST. BEGINNING WHAT BECAME A 45- MINUTE DISCUSSION, AMB  
TOLD SOMOZA THAT THE DEPARTMENT WAS INTERESTED IN LEARNING  
HIS VIEWS ON THE SITUATION AND THE POLICIES OF THE GON IN  
COPING WITH IT IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE FSLN ATTACK AND THE  
PROPOSED GENERAL STRIKE. SOMOZA SAID THAT HE WOULD BREAK THE  
STRIKE. HE COULD NOT GIVE UP POWER UNDER PRESSURE, HE SAID,  
BECAUSE THE GON WOULD COLLAPSE AND ANARCHY WOULD

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FOLLOW. UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, HESAID HE WAS NOT  
PREPARED TO REMOVE ANYONE FROM THE NATIONAL GUARD (GN).  
"WHEN PEOPLE ARE TRYING TO DESTROY YOU, THE RULING GROUP  
MUST BE COHESIVE AND DEFEND ITSELF." HE SAID HE WOULD  
NOT RESIGN BECAUSE SUCH ACTION WOULD BREAK THE LIBERAL-  
CONSERVATIVE PACT OF 1972 AND BECAUSE THE OPPOSITION WAS  
TOTALLY DIVIDED AND WAS A MINORITY WHICH DID NOT CONTROL

THE ACTIVISTS. ANARCHY WOULD RESULT IF HE LEFT. "I WILL NOT GIVE POWER TO A GROUP WHICH WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE SITUATION HERE."

2. SOMOZA SAID HE WOULD NOT IMPOSE A NEW STATE OF SIEGE DESPITE GN PRESSURE, BUT WOULD INSTEAD USE THE RADIO AND TELEVISION CODE TO CONTROL "COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA AND AGITATION" CONTRIBUTING TO THE STRIKE EFFORT BY SUSPENDING SOME PROGRAMS. HOWEVER, HE WAS PLANNING TO UPDATE THE CODE TO MAKE IT A MORE MODERN TOOL SO THAT THE GON WOULD NOT BE BOTH PROSECUTOR AND JUDGE. THE PROCEEDINGS WOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM. SOMOZA SAID THAT HE HAD WAITED FOR THE CONSERVATIVES TO SUGGEST SUCH REFORMS, BUT THAT NOW HE WILL HAVE TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE.

3. SOMOZA WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE WILL JAIL ANY LEADERS PROMOTING GENERAL STRIKE. AMB ASKED IF ANY ARREST ORDERS AGAINST POLITICAL LEADERS WERE OUTSTANDING (E.G., AGAINST ROBELO). SOMOZA SAID THAT ROBELO'S ORDER HAD BEEN LIFTED AND THAT NO OTHER ORDERS HAD YET BEEN ISSUED. SOMOZA SAID HE WOULD ALSO USE THE CENTRAL BANK AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS TO BRING PRESSURE ON BUSINESSES WHICH CLOSED IN SUPPORT OF THE STRIKE. THE AMB ASKED IF SOMOZA THOUGHT SUCH REPRESSIVE MEASURES WOULD BE EFFECTIVE. SOMOZA REPLIED AFFIRMATIVELY BUT ADDED THAT THE MEASURES WOULD NOT BE REPRESSIVE. HIS PLAN WAS SECRET

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THAT IF BUSINESSES WHICH OWED MONEY TO THE GON OR ANY FINANCIAL INSTITUTION OVER WHICH HE HAD INFLUENCE WERE TO CLOSE IN SUPPORT OF THE STRIKE, THE LOAN WOULD BE IMMEDIATELY CALLED. SOMOZA ADDED THAT HE DID NOT WANT THE AMB TO THINK THAT HE WAS CORNERED OR AFRAID -- IN FACT, AS OF THAT MORNING, HE SAID ONLY JINOTEGA AND ESTELI WERE 75 PERCENT AND 95 PERCENT CLOSED DUE TO THE STRIKE AND SEEMED TO POSE PROBLEMS. IN ALL OTHER CITIES, AT LEAST 75 PERCENT OF BUSINESS WERE OPEN.

4. SOMOZA TOLD THE AMB THAT, UNLIKE THE PAST, HE WOULD BEGIN TO "PRUNE" OPPOSITION (NOTE: AMB UNDERSTANDS THIS TO BE A TERM WHICH SOMOZA EMPLOYS TO INDICATE A WEEDING OUT OF OPPOSITION WITH A VIEW TO RENDERING IT IMPOTENT. SUCH OPPOSITION COULD BE ATTACKED BY HIM THROUGH POLITICAL, FINANCIAL OR OTHER MEANS. END NOTE). THEN HE SAID HE WOULD DEFEAT THE STRIKE, THAT "THESE PEOPLE ARE A BUNCH OF IMBECILES," AND THAT THEY (THE OPPOSITION) DIDN'T CONTROL THE AGITATORS. "THEY ARE PAPER TIGERS. WHAT I SHOULD BE DOING IS NEGOTIATING DIRECTLY WITH THE MARXISTS AND THE RADICALS INSTEAD OF THESE PEOPLE." THE AMB ASKED SOMOZA WHY HE DIDN'T FOLLOW SUCH AN APPROACH.

SOMOZA SAID THAT HE MUST AWAIT FURTHER CRYSTALIZATION TO "PRUNE" THE MARXISTS. "ISN'T THAT WHAT POLITICS IS ALL ABOUT, AMBASSADOR?", SOMOZA ASKED. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED, "THAT IS ONE TYPE OF POLITICS, SIR."

5. AMB RAISED THE QUESTION OF "MEDIATION" BY THE VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT AS HAD BEEN SUGGESTED BY LA PRENSA THE PREVIOUS DAY. SOMOZA REPLIED THAT NO NEED EXISTED FOR MEDIATION BY VENEZUELA. ALL THAT WAS REQUIRED WAS FOR THE OPPOSITION TO UNITE AND GET ITSELF ORGANIZED AND NEGOTIATE. THE AMB NOTED THE INCREASING POLARIZATION AND ESCALATION OF CONFLICT. DAILY DEATHS AND MUTUAL DISTRUST WERE RESULTING IN NO PROGRESS TOWARD NEGOTIATIONS. THE AMB REMINDED SOMOZA THAT THE USG HAD BEEN AND CONTINUES TO  
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ENCOURAGE THE OPPOSITION TO MAKE A SERIES OF DEMANDS WHICH COULD BE NEGOTIATED AND LEAD TO A COMPROMISE.

6. SOMOZA REPLIED THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS A HARDER LINE FROM THE USG WITH THE OPPOSITION. HE HAD NOTICED THAT THE FSLN HAD SAID IN PANAMA THAT THE USG WAS SUPPORTING SOMOZA. CLEARLY, HE CONTINUED, THEY ARE NOT FRIENDS OF THE USG AND DIDN'T APPRECIATE OUR EFFORTS. MANY BUSINESSMEN, HE SAID, WERE NOW SAYING "BETTER TACHO (I.E., SOMOZA) THAN THE FSLN". BASICALLY, THE OPPOSITION WAS VERY WEAK -- SURELY A MINORITY ENCOURAGED FROM ABROAD. HE NOTED THAT VENEZUELA'S CONGRESS HAD CONDEMNED THE GON, AND THAT IN BOGOTA, AN INTERNATIONAL COFFEE MEETING DID NOT WANT GON PARTICIPATION EVEN AS AN OBSERVER. SOMOZA WANTED THE AMB TO TELL WASHINGTON THAT HE HAD BOYCOTTED MANY CONFERENCES IN THE PAST FOR THEIR ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENTS AND HE HOPED THAT PAST FRIENDSHIP WOULD BE RECIPROCATED AND THAT WE WOULD NOT BE PERSUADED

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7591

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TO MOVE AGAINST THE GON AND PRODUCE CHAOS HERE.

7. SOMOZA CONTINUED, "JUST BECAUSE A MYSTIC IS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES NOW, YOU CANNOT FALL INTO THE TRAP OF INTRODUCING CHAOS IN CENTRAL AMERICA". THE AMB NOTED THAT THE U.S. OBJECTIVE IS TO ENCOURAGE DEMOCRATIC EVOLUTION AND PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT HERE AND THAT WE TRY TO BE A MODERATING INFLUENCE. SOMOZA REPLIED, "LOOK, MR. AMBASSADOR, THE U.S. IN THIS COUNTRY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MEDIATOR. I HAVE TOLD YOU THAT I AM WILLING TO NEGOTIATE ALL OF THE DEMANDS OF THE OPPOSITION. THE PROBLEM IS NOT THAT I DON'T WANT TO ESTABLISH THE BASIS FOR THE FUTURE NICARAGUA, BUT IT IS THE OPPOSITION THAT DOES NOT PAY ATTENTION TO U.S. POLICY OBJECTIVES." HE ADDED THAT HE COULDN'T ACCEPT "WILD DEMANDS" OF THE OPPOSITION FOR HIS RESIGNATION AND FOR HIS SON'S LEAVING THE GN. "WHAT IS THIS NONSENSE OF ANTAGONISM TOWARD A 26-YEAR OLD BOY?" THE AMB ASKED, "HOW OLD WERE YOU WHEN YOU BECAME CHIEF DIRECTOR OF THE GN?" "31," REPLIED SOMOZA. "WELL," SAID THE AMB, "THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT THE OPPOSITION FEARS -- THAT YOUR SON WILL BECOME CHIEF DIRECTOR AND YOU WILL BE ABLE TO EXERCISE POWER THROUGH HIM."

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8. SOMOZA SAID THE AMB DIDN'T UNDERSTAND, THAT CONDITIONS ARE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT NOW. THEN, HE HAD BEEN THE ONLY UNIVERSITY-TRAINED PROFESSIONAL. NOW, THE GN WAS MORE TRAINED. (NOTE: EMB DATA INDICATE THAT UNIVERSITY-GN OFFICERS (E.G., WEST POINT) RAPIDLY DEPART TO CAREERS IN SOMOZA-OWNED BUSINESSES RATHER THAN RISE THROUGH THE RANKS TO SENIOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS. END NOTE). SOMOZA SAID THAT, WHEN HIS FATHER WAS ASSASSINATED, HE WENT TO THE OFFICER CORPS AND TOLD THEM THAT HIS POSITION HAD DEPENDED UPON THEIR LOYALTY TO HIS FATHER, THAT THEY DIDN'T OWE HIM THEIR LOYALTY AND THAT THEY MUST DECIDE WHO SHOULD BE THEIR LEADER. EVERYONE, INCLUDING OLDER MEN DECIDED HE SHOULD BE THE LEADER DUE TO HIS SUPERIOR TRAINING AND PAST RECORD. THE CURRENT SITUATION IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT HE REPEATED. SOMOZA SAID HE WAS WILLING TO MAKE CHANGES INSTITUTION BY INSTITUTION,

ESTABLISHING A TIME FRAME FOR CHANGE, BUT HE COULD NOT PRECIPITATE CHANGES UNDER CURRENT CONDITONS. WHAT NICARAGUA NEEDED WAS TWO SEPARATE LEADERS -- A CIVILIAN AND A MILITARY -- TO REPLACE HIM, IF CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY WAS TO CONTINUE.

9. SOMOZA SAID THAT U.S. COMMERCIAL BANKS WERE PUTTING THE SQUEEZE ON NICARAGUA'S ECONOMY AND DID NOT WANT TO LEND TO THE GON OR PRIVATE BUSINESS. SOMOZA HOPED THE USB WOULD HELP AS NICARAGUA OWNED LARGE SHORT-TERM DEBT. SHOULD THE BANKS CEASE PROVIDING CREDIT, A DEVALUATION MUST RESULT. NOT FOR SOMOZA, BUT FOR NICARAGUA, THE USG SHOULD AID THE GON. SOMOZA EMPHASIZED THAT IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE 1972 EARTHQUAKE, ANOTHER LEADER WOULD BE RUNNING THE COUNTRY. HE TERMED HIS FIRST PRESIDENCY VERY SUCCESSFUL AND NOTED THAT HE HAD NOT HAD TO IMPOSE A STATE OF SIEGE THEN. BECUASE OF THE EARTHQUAKE, HE HAD HAD TO AGAIN  
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TAKE OVER. NOW HE WAS FACING FOREIGN-INDUCED PROBLEMS FROM A MINORITY. "MR. AMBASSADOR, DON'T YOU THINK THAT AS A MAN, I WOULD BE MUCH HAPPIER IN SWITZERLAND, THE U.S. OR SPAIN ENJOYING LIFE? THE PROBLEM IS THAT I CANNOT LEAVE POWER AND LEAVE A VACUUM HERE. THIS IS WHY I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE OPPOSITION THE FUTURE PHYSIOGNOMY OF NICARAGUA."

10. COMMENT: EMB SEES PROBLEM AS THE OPPOSITON BEING TOO WEAK NOW TO TOPPLE GON AND SOMOZA KNOWS THIS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE OPPOSITION REFUSES TO NEGOTIATE WITH SOMOZA. IN THE FACE OF AN INTRANSIGENT OPPOSITION STILL TOO WEAK TO OVERTHROW HIM, SOMOZA IS UNWILLING TO GO BEYOND OFFERS TO NEGOTIATE -- WITHOUT MAKING THESE OFFERS CREDIBLE BY DEMONSTRATING THAT HIS IS WILLING TO RELINQUISH POWER. THE ONLY FORCE SOMOZA RESPECTS AND FEARS IS THE U.S., AND HE IS AWARE OF THE "BLANDNESS" OF USG POLICY. THIS RESULTS IN A STALEMEATE, FURTHER EXACERBATING TENSION AND VIOLENCE AND MAKING INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY A PEACEFUL, DMOCRATIC TRANSITION. IN THE ABSENCE OF A MORE ACTIVE U.S. POLICY SPONSORING SOME FORM OF MEDIATION BY A THIRD PARY, CHRONIC VIOLENCE IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE, WITH ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT PROBABLY INCREASING ON ALL PARTS.

11. THE GN IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING DISAFFECTED WITH THE US -- FEELING WE ARE ENGAGING IN A PLAN OF DESTABILIZATION. THE OPPOSITION IS DISAFFECTED WITH US ALSO BECAUSE OF OUT "BLAND", "INEFFECTIVE" POLICY VS. SOMOZA. IN THE COMING WEEK, TWO CONTROVERSIAL AID LOANS ARE BEING PRESENTED IN CONGRESS. THIS WILL FEED ON THE FRUSTRATION

OF THE OPPOSITION SHOULD (AS EMB EXPECTS) THE GENERAL STRIKE FAIL TO TOPPLE GON. (CERTAINLY, AFTER THE FEBRUARY STRIKE THERE WAS INCREASED ANTI-US FEELINGS). KTHE GON IS ALSO DISAFFECTED BY THE LACK OF SOLID USG SUPPORT TO WHICH IT FEELS ENTITLED.

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12. OUR CURRENT POLICY IS PARTY TO THIS DILEMMA. THE GON TAKES NO INITIATIVES WAITING FOR THE OPPOSITION TO PROPOSE THEM. THE OPPOSITION WILL NOT NEGOTIATE UNLESS THEY FEEL THAT THE USG IS PREPARED TO ASSIST IN PROVIDING SOME TYPE OF INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES. US POLICY IS TO NOT OFFER ANY SUCH GUARANTEES. SO, THE OPPOSITION PURSUES ITS OWN PLAN -- INTRANSIGENCE, DEMANDS FOR SOMOZA'S IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION, GENERAL STRIKE, ETC. WHEN THE COURSE OF ACTION FAILS TO PRODUCE THE OVERTHROW OF THE GON, A BACKLASH AGAINST THE USG DEVELOPS IN WHICH WE ARE ACCUSED OF SUPPORTING THE GON THROUGH SUCH THINGS AS AID LOANS, ETC.

13. EMB IS FINDING INCREASINGLY LESS EVIDENCE THAT SOMOZA WILL INDEED RELINQUISH CONTROL AS PROMISED IN THEABSENCE OF ACTIVE, CONTINUED, AND EFFECTIVE USG POLICY DESIGNED TO PRESSURE HIM TO MAKE REFORMS NECESSARY TO PERMIT EFFECTIVE ELECTIONS IN 1981 OR EARLIER. DEPARTMENT MIGHT WISH TO CONSIDER A NEW COURSE OF ACTION AS CURRENT INSTRUCTIONS MAKE EMB ROLE A SELF-LIMITING ONE. POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION INCLUDE: (A) SPONSOR OR

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7592

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SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION EFFORTS (E.G., COLOMBIA, HOLLAND, ETC.) WHICH COULD GIVE IMPETUS TO A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF CURRENT IMPASSE; (B) CONFRONTING SOMOZA PRIVATELY WITH THE DEMANDS FOR CHANGES WHICH, IF NOT RAPIDLY FORTHCOMING, WOULD LEAD TO U.S. BOYCOTT; (C) ASSISTANCE TO THE MODERATE OPPOSITION IN MAKING ITSELF A UNIFIED VIABLE ALTERNATIVE BOTH TO THE CURRENT GON AND TO THE FSLN AND MORE RADICAL OPPOSITION; (D) ACTIVE AND COMPLETE SUPPORT FOR THE GON DUE TO THE FSLN THREAT AND THE LACK OF AN EFFECTIVE, VIABLE OPPOSITION ALTERNATIVE; (E) CONTINUATION OF CURRENT USG POLICY; (F) WITHDRAWAL. EMB BELIEVES THE FIRST TWO ALTERNATIVES OFFER THE GREATEST POSSIBILITIES -- ESPECIALLY IF PURSUED IN SOME COMBINATION.  
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## Message Attributes

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